



Eric Milstead
Director

Legislative Services Office

Idaho State Legislature

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Request to the Coronavirus Financial Advisory Committee from the Legislative Services Office.

The Legislative Services Office (LSO) requests \$1,236,000 in strategic initiative funding for Statehouse audio/visual improvements and related technology upgrades to provide for remote and social distancing legislative work.

The Legislature's current audio/visual technology and related IT infrastructure is inadequate for the safeguards that must be taken during the current pandemic. The Legislature needs a work environment that provides for social distancing, remote work, or a combination of both approaches. Funds for A/V upgrades and related technology improvements will allow the Legislature to revise the manner in which it conducts its business in light of COVID-19.

Beginning in the fall of 2020, in response to the pandemic, the Idaho Legislature will adopt alternative approaches to legislative work to protect the health of legislators, the public, staff, executive branch personnel, the media, lobbyists, and others. These alternatives will be used for 2020 interim committees, the December 2020 legislative organizational session, new member training in November 2020, and for any special session the Governor may call prior to January 2021. These alternative approaches also will be used during the 2021 Legislative Session in the event the pandemic remains ongoing.

These alternatives reflect three new approaches to legislative work: (1) social distancing in the Statehouse, (2) remote work, and (3) a combination of those two approaches, referred to as a hybrid approach, wherein legislative work is conducted both in the Statehouse (in a socially distancing manner) and remotely where some members attend or participate in a committee or floor session from a remote location.

Each of these approaches requires significant upgrades to the Legislature's audio/visual technology. Such upgrades will also require corresponding improvements to Idaho Public Television's "Idaho in Session" infrastructure to maintain IPTV's ability to stream and/or broadcast legislative work to the public. All of the approaches discussed in this request are being developed in a manner to safeguard the public's ability to observe and participate in the legislative process.

On July 2, 2020, the Idaho Capitol Commission unanimously approved the A/V upgrades and related technology improvements described in this request. In addition, on June 18, 2020, the Department of Administration's Division of Public Works approved LSO's request to designate the project as an emergency pursuant to Idaho Code section 67-5711B. The Division authorized the Division of Public Works and LSO to make public works contracts to upgrade the Statehouse's technology for legislative activities in response to the pandemic.

Kristin Ford, Manager
Research & Legislation

Paul Headlee, Manager
Budget & Policy Analysis

April Renfro, Manager
Legislative Audits

Glenn Harris, Manager
Information Technology

Overview

The Legislature has identified three potential approaches to holding a pandemic-affected session. Ultimately, the Legislature will decide which approach it adopts. Because it is unknown what the COVID-19 situation may look like in the coming months, it is essential that planning accommodates a variety of situations.

1. "Remote" session: This involves all meeting participants joining a zoom meeting or webinar from a remote location (this could be from their homes, lodging in Ada county, or their offices within the Capitol).
2. "Social Distancing" session: This means all legislators are in the Capitol but are spaced according to current social distancing guidelines. This approach requires some technology upgrades, but not as many as the hybrid solution.
3. "Hybrid" session: A hybrid session involves some legislators meeting in the Statehouse while others participate from remote locations via zoom meetings or webinars.

Since planning for a hybrid session necessarily accommodates either of the other options, this request to CFAC outlines the improvements required for that solution. Currently, we anticipate a hybrid session, with most legislators participating from within the building, but a percentage participating remotely.

In the Senate, this will most likely involve many legislators being present but socially distant on the Senate floor while other legislators participate via zoom from within the Capitol or from an off-site office space. The Senate will also need a way to display remote (zoom) participants in the chambers as well as transmitting events in the chambers to the zoom participants.

The House is considering a similar approach, with details still being developed, including the possibility of working in a split-chamber fashion divided between the third-floor chamber and EW42 (House Revenue & Taxation Committee Room), with audio and video transmitted back and forth via enhanced in-house systems, as well as remote participants using the same zoom technology as the Senate. The House will need to be able to duplicate its calendar/voting board as well as display live video of third-floor chamber proceedings in EW42 while also sending the video feed of proceedings in EW42 up to monitors on the House floor. The House will also need a way to display remote (zoom) participants in both locations.

The proposed technology upgrades accommodate for all reasonable locations for distancing and remote participation as well as any possible split-floor formation.

Standing committees are currently expected to meet in their usual rooms, redesigned for social distancing of members that are present for the meetings as well as remote participants using zoom meeting or webinar technology. With the new distancing-oriented design of the hearing rooms, there may be little to no room for a public gallery. If the Statehouse is open to the public, we will plan to set up overflow viewing options in other locations throughout the building.

Necessary Technology Upgrades

Broadly speaking, what is necessary to hold a hybrid session is an upgraded audio/video system capable of handling echo cancellation at a greater level of efficiency than our current system offers and upgrading our A/V distribution network. This includes upgrades on the third floor (Senate Chambers, House

Chambers, JFAC). The best solution is to replace the standard input cards with Acoustical Echo Cancellation (AEC) input cards. Also, this includes upgrades in both the West Wing committee rooms and East Wing committee rooms. Because the two wings currently have different systems (one wing has slightly newer technology than the other), the upgrades will be slightly different; however, following the upgrades both wings will have the same improved capabilities.

Throughout our network, current A/V equipment will need to be replaced and enhanced to accommodate video conferencing and PowerPoint presentations. This will allow sharing of video from a single source to multiple end points (e.g. in split House of Representatives, or committee room overflow/remote gallery scenarios). Another possible addition includes video display equipment, likely HD large-screen televisions.

Along with the hardware upgrades, a considerable amount of A/V system programming work will be required to increase the functionality of our existing systems/programs to the broader capabilities needed.

Upgrades Necessary for Idaho in Session : IPTV

There is an immediate need to improve the core infrastructure of the Idaho in Session systems to make them more reliable and capable during the Legislature's work. Funding of this portion of the request will provide better consistency with video signals by consolidating to NDI (IP-based) and HD-SDI (typical video format).

An NDI-multicamera upgrade will allow for the greatest amount of flexibility for what the Legislature may do. It is also a design that helps future-proof IPTV and LSO efforts. In addition, it allows for less expensive capital replacement of older IPTV systems in coming years. Adding racks in an adjacent room will be needed since IPTV's existing room lacks adequate cooling, and the equipment racks lack room for additional necessary equipment to support the changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Adopting NDI technology, which moves over data cables, much like the internet, allows IPTV to simplify its workflow with compatible systems and signal formats.

The following table reflects a breakdown of project costs.

Location	Description	Cost
Senate/House Chambers/EW 42/JFAC Room	Acoustic Echo Cancellation (AEC) hardware for chamber floor and for two-way talk path between rooms & other modifications.	\$89,500
10 committee rooms and Senate/House Chambers	Includes equipment to allow video switching between ten House and Senate committee rooms and House and Senate Chambers.	\$477,842
Install cameras in 7 committee rooms	The cameras will send video via the new NDI video network to IPTV. IPTV can then mix camera video with local laptop presentation video for streaming and backfeed as a source back to the committee room to be injected into laptop for remote meetings to allow committee members to participate in meetings remotely.	\$197,283
Multi-Cameras—Committee Rms (IPTV)	Install NDI-multi camera technology for compatibility with upgraded Statehouse A/V systems.	\$189,265
Audio Upgrade to Senate committee rooms	Upgrade Senate committee rooms' audio to match House system for improved performance and reliability.	\$57,258
Communication Room	Upgrade system-wide audio server and input cards.	\$17,530
House New Large Screen Monitors	Install a second monitor and upgrade the existing monitor in the House Chamber to provide views from other committee rooms.	\$10,456
Video Teleconferencing Support Specialist	Video teleconferencing support to the legislature for interim committees, trainings and various legislative work through December 2020.	\$22,000
Committee Rooms/House/Senate Chambers	Plexiglas barriers and additional desks for legislator safety throughout the chambers and committee rooms.	\$60,000
	Tax/Bond/Contingencies	\$115,000
Total		\$1,236,134